

The PASSING *of* the BUFFALO



By BUCKSKIN

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The Passing the Buffalo

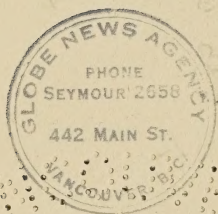


A Happy Hunting Ground



The PASSING *of* THE BUFFALO

By
BUCKSKIN

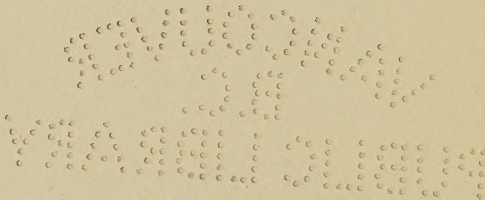


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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Sitting Bull—Sioux Chief.

Trader Légaré—Willow Bunch Diplomat.

General Miles—of G. A. R.

Colonel Macleod

Colonel Irvine

Inspector Walsh

Colonel Macdonell

} R.N.W.M.P.

General Terry

General McNeil

Major Brotherton

} of G. A. R.

Rain-in-the-Face—Sioux Chief.

Father Martin—Diplomat.

Ogalla Fire—Sioux Chief.

United States Troops, Fur Traders, Cowboys,
Hunters, Skinners, Homesteaders, Ranchers, Sioux,
Blackfeet, Bloods, Crows, Piegans, Assinaboins.

Buffalo, Wolves, Grizzlies, Coyotes.

Scene: North America.

Washington, Ottawa, Willow Bunch, Wood Moun-
tain, Black Hills, Banff, Boundary Line, Canadian
Prairies.

The PASSING *of* THE BUFFALO

PROLOGUE

From the shores of Lake Manitoba westward,
Along the auspicious forks of the Saskatchewan,
Among wild roses in the cemeteries
Of the dinosaurs on the Red Deer,
And up the foothills of the Rocky Mountains;
From the long summer day around Great Slave
Lake,
South in poplar glades and willow parks,
Combing with a million hoofs the sloping
Wool of the windy plains, trampling the
Mausoleums of the mound builders in Ohio,
Treading, perhaps, the Natural Bridge of Virginia;
Unopposed on the meadows of Alleghany bottoms,
Lured, at times, by cold waves almost to the Gulf;
Now drinking from the Mississippi trough,
Now jamming with carcasses the quicksands of the
Platte;
Where steam the geysers of the Yellowstone,
Where rainbows of the ages stain;
The canyons of the Colorado;
Over the fossil forests, and retreats of the
Cave-dwellers; sparing only the cactus whence
Deer at daybreak sipped the dews of Texas;
Everywhere, everywhere, by seasons,
Ranged the buffalo.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

PROLOGUE

Not handsome, but most virile was the type;
And picturesque in habit was the species.
Head thrust low as though from constant feeding,
Sturdy horns use-tempered to the power
Of the neck and crested withers, with beard and
Mane and shaggy fur to defy the blizzard,
The brown animal was an ornament
Appropriate to the treeless stretches of
An unkempt continent.
Eighteen hundred pounds the bull; a cow eight
hundred.

Weaklings and the maimed the wolves devoured.
And the heir, attaining prowess daily,
Envied the champion of a herd,
And struck for mastery his sire, if need be,
That conqueror's blood might be the test of place.
His subjects, fifty, grazed in herds led by
A grandam. Cows, calves and growing stock,
At her command, a centre formed, while the bulls
In circle, facing out with lowered horns—
The chief on danger's threshold—waited for
The vicious grizzly or the ravenous pack.
Besides, his reign was troublesome without:
To hold his sway within, he must disport
With death on the sharp horns of peers,

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

PROLOGUE

Who, in the tournaments of every noon,
Aspired to dominion at the well.
Thus clustered they the plateau of North
America in numbers, sometimes that
Took weeks to cross a stream,
That held up trains and steamboats in later days,
That pounded the earth into dust clouds
And bellowed with a volume like thunder
When they plunged in a wild stampede.
Such were the spectacles when the red man,
After crossing the ice of Behring Strait,
Wandered south; such they were when Spaniards
Travelled inland from the Gulf; such when
British sailors from Chesapeake Bay
Ventured through the Alleghany pass.

American mythology comes down
But not the antiquity of the buffalo.
Geology will account for ages in
The development of a species, and ages again
In a slow decline. The buffalo were at
Their best when America was discovered.
There was no decline. Their disappearance,
At the blighting touch of civilization,
Resembles more the nature of a reproach.
We only know that they were preceded on

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

PROLOGUE

The plains by mammoths and sea-beds.
History reasons that they must have been here
When the Hebrews drove their flocks out of the
Land of Egypt. From their numbers—
Fifty millions when the white man came,
Surviving fire, rivers, and the chase—
'Tis likely they were plentiful when a cowbell
First tinkled to an Alpine village shepherd.
How many generations had elapsed
For types distinct to gather to four winds?
How many seasons did it take for herds,
Shedding their flaky winter coats during the
Spring migrations north, to rub smooth hollows
In the boulders of the Souris valley?
Familiar were they to the hunters of
The Aztecs for centuries when Cortez
Beheld the strangely proportioned ox in the
Menagerie of Montezuma's capital.
Legions, drifting like the shadows of clouds, were
Outstanding features of the sunny prairies
When frontiersmen were warring with red patriots
For the tenure of the auburn empire.
But in our day the buffalo-birds welcome
Not the hordes triumphal, swinging baton
Horns to the imperious truncheons

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

PROLOGUE

Of the migrating grandam leader;
Nor do they ride jubilant on the crest
Of a ferocious king of the trails;
Nor yet do they utter a chirp in each foot-fall
To lead a derelict, blinded by the fire,
Now scenting the buds in spring—
Like the salmon of Pacific rivers—
To his birthplace in the wolf willows;
Nor do the hunters press a forest refugeé
Into once favoring, open habitations,
Where curiosity will sometimes even
Yet inveigle the innocent antelope.
For type and derelict, white robe and blue,
Beaver robe and black and buckskin,
Crowded from their pastures long have been
By the encroachment west of emigrants
From cramped Europe, spreading themselves
Over this haven of liberty and fortune.
But what a sacrifice here
Did Freedom make to Mammon!
While nearer by an ocean span
To the court of Isabella
Contented peasants in Russia
Still drive the tar-shod geese
One hundred miles to market.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

ACT FIRST

Scene I

Was there not sacrifice?
Every want of the aborigine
Of the plains the buffalo satisfied.
During centuries both had found room to
Follow their whims wherever these led them.
Centuries more they might have continued
Side by side, as parts of the wilds.
Natural lord, he took at the arrow head
All his requirements: skins for his tent,
Fur for garments; robes for his couch.
Over the camp-fire, in the wake of the
Hunter, his squaw broiled the steaks for his
blessing; or
Dried and smoked the strips that were choicest,
Pulverized them, and the powder boiled with the
Tallow, part for part, or with marrow,
Seasoned the whole with cherries ground, pits and
all;
Then the essence, savory, life-giving,
Stored in bags of skin, air-tight, portable.
This was the pemmican.
It was insurance when grass-hoppers, fire, or
Drouth, or enemies, in the days before
Ponies, drove the herds beyond reach of a
Tribe.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act I, Scene II

Scene II

Like for the staple, so for his
Minor wants, nature's child to the buffalo
Turned. If a canoe he must have to go
Fishing, a shield for battle, a drum for a
Pow-wow, cooking utensils, hide he
Used for them all. The long, wool-like
Hair his regalia for war ornamented.
Indian corn with a shoulder-blade he could hoe.
And it is said that an Indian
Once, in a blizzard, slew and ripped open a
Buffalo, resting with head to the north under
Snow; and, into the warm entrails crawling,
Found he the shelter, and food, and rest
That saved his life.

Scene III

True! To the savage the buffalo signified
All that does gold to the white man; and more.
For, according to primitive standards of
Wealth, the sacred beast furnished in times of peace,
Choicest abundance; in war time a line of
Communications inseverable;
Plenteous for old age, an annuity;
Children's incommutable legacy.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act I, Scene III

Pleasure for him and earthly happiness
Plenitude found in war and the chase;
And the warrior-hunter's weapons
Buried with him were above his
Hacked scalp,
Doubts to subdue about his renown
On his entry into
The land of the Great Spirit.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act I, Scene IV

Scene IV

Would a later generation fancy
To itself the days of the buffalo?
Then visit the Portage Plains which dip below
The horizon with a sky-line like that at sea—
These plains on a night in harvest—
And face the rising moon! Where the stooks
Cast their shadows, dotting the silver landscape,
You will see the ghosts of the buffalo at rest.
Then if you are moved to invoke the past,
Seek in October a flax field at Swift Current.
The burly, tufted heaps in a hundred nameless
Shades of brown extend in files
Along the russet stubble.
A crashing separator blows up
The matted straw.
Imagine there, with a beaver-dam hard by,
Ten brace of roaring bulls, advancing from
Admiring cows, pawing up the clover,
Clashing horns for defiance, and deciding
In gory battle rings
Which dusky harem
Shall drink the water first.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act I, Scene V

Scene V

In the unstoried past, how
Frequent were these quixotic encounters,
And how violent, might have been guessed by the
Earliest traders from the piles of
Bones, fairly fresh, bleaching beside the
Grass-grown wallows, and where the ubiquitous
Trails to water converged the files at
Noon upon a coulee.

But the Indians
Gathered the bones for the sugar refineries.
Yet as a struggling homesteader walks by his
Oxen, rather than bump with the wagon
Over the ruts, he picks up a skull and
Horns of a peerless judge of the jousts, as a
Silent umpire of effort—unchanging
Winter or summer—for the bench
Over the door of his sod-house: a day-star,
Hoary of conquests in the days when
Struggle began with ambition and ended with
Death or victory—
The grim days before the pioneers.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

ACT SECOND

Scene I

Nevertheless, indomitable as
Was the buffalo against his
Own kind and his natural enemies,
Even the grizzly, he was an easy
Prey to the weapons and cunning of man.
Lured was he within arrow shot on the
Open plains by the Indian with a
Pelt for decoy. Another device of the
Red men was to corral a herd and
Rush them over a precipice.
Startled they were not by the crack of a
Rifle. A hunter behind a thicket
Brought down a member, and the rest of the
Family gathered in consternation
Trying to raise the victim until,
One by one, the specimens singled for
Slaughter sank.
And as their pastures seldom afforded a
Refuge from pursuit a headlong
Scamper was their common resource when they
Scented or saw an enemy.
Fatal was this to the weak and young. Hence
Age and innocence went out together.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act II, Scene I

But their fur was
Nature's provision for the northern
Winter. And as long as grain must be
Marketed, so long must be found a poor
Substitute for the buffalo-coat, in
Order to render travel cheaply
Comfortable for the plainsman
In the hard-wheat temperatures.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act II, Scene II

Scene II

But no effective champion had the Buffalo. Sioux or Cheyenne chiefs may have Led their nations to war against some Regular troops, as an eloquent protest That the Indian's livelihood was at Stake. But the superiority Shown by civilized man was the writing On the wall for chief as well as for Self-sustaining brute. When opened the Nineteenth century there were no buffalo East of the Mississippi. Already the Market for robes had extended to Europe. Stimulated by pony and rifle the Indian nature responded lavishly To the round-up and slaughter. Then as rancheros pushed farther west the Drove retreated ten miles a year. Within five decades the wedge of Settlement had divided the buffalo Into two principal groups, the Southern and the northern herds.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act II, Scene III

Scene III

From that time
Forward, the millions of the southern
Herd were pitted against the bullets of
Armies successive of lawless adventurers.
California's gold drew the first. The
Fortune-seekers in prairie-schooners
Over the middle west and the mountains
Hastened. The Southern Pacific Railroad
Opened up to hunters and traders
Teeming theatres.
The release of daring spirits
Lusty for frontier life, at the close of the
Civil War, gave zest to the
Rapid displacement of buffalo on the
Plains. Then the lever that opened the
Santa Fé pulled the trigger of the
Great white fusillade.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act II, Scene IV

Scene IV

Millions were shot down
While millions lasted;
To thousands they dwindled;
But not while a man,
With hyena nostril
And a heart pity-blasted,
Would ride for a price
After beeve that ran,

Was there an aspen,
Bulrush or cavern
But trembled response
To a dumb tongue's bleat,
Nor a bank, nor exchange,
Nor a wild west tavern
But jingled blood money
To excited feet.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act II, Scene IV

Skidders followed the
Hunters, and reddened
The green with carcasses
Coyotes would eat,
Only that murderers'
Tracks never deadened,
Though grass failed in mourning
For innocent feet.

Robes in the market
Fell to a dollar.
Then many a maverick
Was vouchsafed to rot
In its shroud in the sunshine.
But chopped was the bawler,
Lest the ghost tell its calf
That the end was not,

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act II, Scene IV

Though vicious strippers
Offered, at lodging
And board, to skin and
Pile, for a stab in three,
Pelts until bullets,
From missing and dodging
Got dearer than tongues,
E'en with carnage free;

Nor when the white man,
Avarice discarded,
For blood nor profit
No jade could hire.
Fine his frenzy was—
By ambition larded—
So the tallow of calves
Must cap the pyre.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO
Act II, Scene IV

That the time-killing
Indian idle would
Not be, with nature so
Wild, and a word
For price, he was furnished
With barrels—free for good
Measure—into which to
Drain the rest of the herd.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

ACT THIRD

Scene I

Sordid, no less, the effacement
Was of the northern herd; attempts at
Preservation by the governments
Of the United States and of Canada
Are obscured in this blur on liberty.
General Custer had made his last stand.
Trapped to Sedan on the Little Big Horn by
Sitting Bull, Rain-in-the-Face, and the Sioux, he
Gave, and so did his valiant aides,
All that they had to give to their country, their
Lives and their memory.
And that terrible episode
Marks the turning point in the history
Of North America where supremacy
Over the dappled panorama
Of the saffron plains passed from the
Shifting lordship of red conquerors
To the established rule of democracies.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene II

Scene II

General Miles, sent with six thousand
Troops to arrest the red-skin leaders,
And to secure the whites against any
Further surprises by the Indians,
Drove the fiery bands north of the
Border. There he must stop.

Canada west was then territorial.
Royal North West Mounted Police had a
Post at Macleod. Finer soldiers—resourceful,
Daring—more intelligent, never
Were to frontier duty assigned. From
Herschel Island to parallel forty-ninth
Scarlet coats and Wellington boots
Represented justice within the
Confines of famine and frost, but beyond the
Reach of civilian authority or
Even militia. If an Eskimo
Murdered a trapper, explorer were lost, or
Indian mission were starving, orders were
Given the nearest post to set out with
Warrants, maps or relief, on a thousand-mile
Journey with cariole, malamutes and sleeping-bags.
So they were fearless.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene III

Scene III

Great unrest was among the
Indians then in Canada; chiefly
Over the ruthless waste of the buffalo.
Friendly and hostile tribes assembled
At the Cypress Hills: Assinaboins,
Blackfeet, Piegans, Bloods and Crows.
Thither Sitting Bull with a hundred
Lodges of Sioux repaired; and with war-paint,
Feathers, drums and harangues, daily
Grew their ferment.

Thither, too, came Colonel Irvine and
Drew up his force of red-coats in column;
Not, however, without diplomacy.
Biscuits were thrown and overtures made for a
Peaceful dispersal. Given were,
Likewise, assurances of redress for
Grievances; and protection.
Trouble was for the nonce averted.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene IV

Scene IV

Other tribes to their habitats banded.
Sitting Bull was a fugitive lawmaker.
Capable, too, was he of perceiving the
Weakness and anxiety of his
Ward. Peculiar, therefore, was his
Flying strength and craftily did he
Plan. He selected the perennial
Hunting ground of tribes that depended
On the buffalo. This was twenty miles
North of the boundary midway between
Willow Bunch and Wood Mountain.
Here were buffalo summer and winter.
Here he could muster an ally by dictating
Terms to tribal hunters. A thousand
Lodges more from Dakota came to his
Camp, some six thousand souls—half warriors.
There was a trading post at Willow Bunch
Kept by Trader Légaré. Here he could
Purchase for war and peace; or make seizure.
Mounted Police had a post at Wood Mountain.
Him they could not oppose, but useful they
Were for neighbors; for they jealously
Wielded the national arm against foreign
Uniforms. Yet they worried over his

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene IV

Presence. Here from
Eighteen hundred and seventy-six for
Nearly three years he defied the powers
Of two helpless sovereignties.

Scene V

Typical of Indian strategy
Was the encampment of the Sioux.
Red River carts, facing out, circled a
Hummocky plain,
Thirty miles in circumference.
These afforded a breast-work that would
Dissipate numbers superior; not unlike the
Circle of horns of the buffalo bulls.
Here, in the centre, were the tepeés, the
Women, old men and children—
Further protected by the folds of the
Landscape. Nightly they held their war dances.
Ponies grazed in this watered corral.
Rounding this area, like a vast moat,
Runs the Great Coulee. Inward at every
Angle tapered ravines; and outward.
Buffalo herds the commissariat

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene V

Formed; and friendly tribes and the squaws
Furnished garments and pemmican.
So that for reasons strategic
Well was the ground situated.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene VI

Scene VI

During an action

Braves behind the carts, by massing as
Pressure demanded, could offer resistance while
Squadrons of roughriders, filing into the
Coulee at the rear, would speed to a
Point unobstructed and, issuing out on the
Prairie, windward the enemy, would in a
Crescent back and forth dash, hanging
Under their saddle-bows, shooting over the
Necks of their ponies, shrieking their devilish
Whoops; their target immovable. Only
Veterans of the guerilla days
After the Civil War could muster the
Courage to stand.

Then for miles beyond the
Round horizon Indian scouts the
Farthest skyline studied by day; and,
Ears to the ground, for the voices of night—
Dipping paddles, startled duck-ponds,
Trailing wolves, or falling hoofs,
These and a hundred other nameless
Notes in the silence of the stars—
Listened, with the sure and sensitive
Tympanum of the wilds.

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THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act III, Scene VII

Scene VII

Thus three powers held with locked horns.
Generous offers Washington made of
Pardon and liberal treatment.
Governor Laird for Canada, too, would
Parley make with the immigrants.
But, secure between cover and comities,
Chiefs preferred the pow-wow to flattery.

Then, besides, to sell their lives
Dearly not unattractive was to a
Nation nursed in war and fighting to
Win a preserve in the Great Hunting Ground.
Strife of centuries, substituted of
Late by righteous warfare to husband the
Buffalo—fast disappearing under the
Red, white and blue—imbued an instinct,
Wedded already to battle, with the
Sanctity of a forlorn defense of
Ancient rights.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

ACT FOURTH

Scene I

Efforts were made by every
Peaceful agency to induce the
Sioux to return to Dakota.
Canada dared not to stir the hornets' nest;
Washington feared they might swarm unawares;
Sitting Bull gazed from the hole to the border; or
Buzzing about, or twitching his wings, he
Sullenly strutted his honeycombed globe—
Ashen with death from a thousand stingers to
Flesh profane on which he would drop or
Sally in tangent. Washington pleaded that at
Least the hive might be shifted a little.
Canada stuttered that it wasn't her
Colony; but to Sitting Bull privately
Hinted that she knew his welcome
Would be unstinted at home.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene II

Scene II

Father Martin and two companions
Came to the camp in seventy-seven.
Sitting Bull notified Colonel Irvine,
Who presided over the conference.

This was the dialogue:

Father M.—I am not sent by the government,
But I am assured that what I
Promise will be carried out.

Do you intend to return or remain?

Sitting B. (turning to Colonel Irvine)—

If I remain will you protect me?

Colonel I.—I told you I would as long as
You behave yourself.

Sitting B.—What would I return for?

What have the Americans to give me?

Once I was rich: plenty of money;

But the Americans stole it all in the

Black Hills. I have to remain with the

White Mother's children.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene III

Scene III

Honorable David Mills in August,
Eighteen hundred and seventy-seven,
Wrote to Colonel Macleod that the government
Of the United States had appointed
Generals Terry and McNeil to
Act as commissioners to negotiate
Terms with Sitting Bull.

Colonel Macleod sat at the parley.

Gen. Terry—If you return we will grant you lands,
Money, provisions each year, and freedom to
hunt.

Gen. McNeil—And we will preserve the buffalo.
Sitting B. (turning disdainfully from them to Col.
Macleod and Insp. Walsh)—

My fathers, you know well
How the Americans have treated us.
They take me for their son, but they have come
Behind me with their guns. When first
Our nation learned to shoot with the gun
To kill meat for our children and women,
It was by the English that we were taught.
But since that time I have been in misery.
I tell you the truth.
Since I was raised I have done nothing bad.
The Americans tried to get our country from us.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene III

Our country, the Black Hills country, was filled
with gold.

I told them not to go into it.

I did not want to leave our golden country.

I had not given them the land

Any more than you would have given it.

The Great Almighty and the Queen know that
There is no harm in me.

I knew that this was our Great Mother's house
When I came here with my people.

Now I see plainly that there are no more
Buffalo, elk or deer on the other side of the line:
All is blood. I don't believe you will help
The Americans do me harm if I behave.

Today you heard the sweet talk of the Americans.
They would give me flour and cattle, and when
They got me across the line they would fight me.
I don't want to disturb the ground, or the sky.
I came to raise my children here.

God Almighty always raised me buffalo
Meat to live on; we will pay for what we want
Here. We asked the Americans to give
Us traders. But instead we got fire-balls.
All the Americans cheated, robbed and laughed
At us.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene III

Now I tell you all that the Americans
Have done to us. And I want you to tell
Our Great Mother all. I could never live
Over there again. They never tell the truth.
They told me that they did not want to fight.
But they commenced it. (Exit)

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene IV

Scene IV

One man and only one in
North America could negotiate
Peace. This was Trader Légaré.
French-Canadian by birth, he early
Entered the west to grapple with fortune
Where and how he might meet it. So at
Willow Bunch, in the Great Coulee, a
Post he established in the seventies.
Few were the Indians then in that country.
Soon, however, tribes from Qu'Appelle to the
Rockies, found the trader fair in his
Dealings; and brought him their hides and
pemmican.
These in turn he sold to the missions and
Fur lords. But he also became the
Friend and confidant of all the tribes.
He their language and rough virtues studied.
Well he knew why they distrusted the white man,
And how implacable, once blood was shed, was their
Spirit. Eight thousand dollars it cost him one
Winter to keep the Sioux from starvation:
Part of which was returned by one government;
The rest was not paid by the other.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene V

Scene V

Then the boundary
Line as imaginary was to the
Indian as it was to the buffalo.
And the crafty savage, knowing each
Coulee, ford, mountain and woods, as
Far as tradition went back, could of a
Sudden spring on an outpost, and, if
Pressed, could sally by an open
Road to safety, over the border,
Baffling pursuit; and depend on the
Barrier to hold his rear, whether
Uncle Sam or John Bull followed after.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene VI

Scene VI

Trader Légaré already had rendered to Canada services valued. Now when General Miles was powerless he to the Trader appealed. And the diplomacy Brought to this mission, not in foreign Courts could be learned, but in the Harder school of a life in the open. Confidence had the Sioux in the trader. But between Willow Bunch and Washington Room there was ample, with history as guide, for Things to get twisted, so the savages Thought. Sitting Bull was willing his Prestige to yield if only he and his Nation permitted would be to live as Nature had taught them. Four times to Washington went the diplomat. Four times to Willow Bunch brought he concessions. All was arranged but a formal surrender. This was the hardest of all.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene VII

Scene VII

In the final war councils
Fear of treachery lurked with indifference
To a bloody arbitrament. But the
Trader patiently went with some
Chiefs to the border, met the General,
Moved among blue and grey till they were satisfied.
They would come back and others would go.
Finally all suspicion broke down.
For at a council of chiefs with eloquence
Simple, like father to children, the trader
Promised to warriors, grizzled with waiting for
Battle, that white men no more would ill-treat the
Red men. And that the buffalo would be
Left for his hunting.

And the chiefs in eloquence
Simple, but not untinged with regret,
Told their braves to go back to their wigwams.

Then the trader rode with Sitting Bull
To the Poplar river; and turned a page of
History by passing the great warrior
From Colonel Macdonell, representing
Canada, to the custody of
Major Brotherton of the American Army.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act IV, Scene VIII

Scene VIII

That was accomplished.
Liberal, too, was the treatment accorded the
Tribes.

But in framing a policy
That would most likely give peace to settlers,
General Miles recommended the wiping
Out of the buffalo. As long as the
Great herds stretched from north to south,
Hostile tribes might supply themselves with
Raiment, food and shelter.
And, with the boundary line for rear-guard,
Could set an army at naught.
Followed the butchery:
Washington intervened not;
And an interpleader for the
Buffalo was not inspired from Ottawa.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

ACT FIFTH

Scene I

Only experience gained in the south added
Anything to the despatch and thoroughness
Of the methods employed in the north. In
Eighteen hundred and seventy-eight, the
Last great herd went south from Saskatchewan.
It did not return.

But the traders, called "Wolfers," by offers of
Whiskey, bribed the Indians, during the
Following decade, to kill the remnants of
Herds, fugitive in Canada, from the
Rocky Mountains to Stony Mountain.
In eighteen hundred and eighty the
Northern Pacific opened the way to the
Last herd in Montana.

By eighteen hundred and eighty-five the
Annual shipment of hides
Dwindled from two hundred thousand to
Zero.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act V, Scene II

Scene II

For cruelty and wantonness
This tragedy abhors rehearsal.
Cowboys and pelt-hunters were the chief actors;
For plot! Greedy traders, disguised as philan-
thropists,
Pleading for shivering humanity,
Bribed the crude avarice of the Indian
To squander his warm estate.
Such was the traffic in hides, tallow and tongues,
That boats for the rivers could not be constructed
Cheaply enough, even from forests primeval,
To market profitably, at the tumbled
Quotations, the glut in these commodities.
Then were measures taken which would have
staggered
Pharoah, himself!
Log canoes, heaped with dried tongues,
And swaddled with skin,
Were shoved into the Missouri to drift to St. Louis,
Or pollute the fragrance
Where they lodged among the bulrushes.
In the maddest days of the carnage
The prairie was black with outstretched
Cows, heifers, yearlings and calves.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act V, Scene II

A murk rose in the sunshine
From the rotting beef.
The wolves had been content with less.
The savage exacted only
A toll for his necessities.
To the noble rage of the white man
Was it left the race to exterminate.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act V, Scene III

Scene III

To the poor, dumb brute, it was left
To bear, as epitaph,
Ogalla Fire's dying soliloquy:
"So passed an ancient monarch of the plains.
Manna from heaven for red man's wants,
No savior found he in the new economy.
The blizzard may chasten untrodden snows.
Missouri must again grow turgid, but not
From bison drowning. Let the prairie fire
Vault, in vain, where bellowed a grand stampede!
Why doth the glow worm still inflame the sweetest
 verdure
For the hungry calf beguiled from its mother's side
By the aurora of the morning star?
For no more in the sombre autumn twilight
Do countless herds inhale the dewy sage
Of Alberta, and fold up in their swarthy robes.
 And on many a vigil,
With many a blush the buxom dawn
Will chase the downy night from her golden egg
In that daisy nest fashioned by the Creator
Between the mountain banks of oceans.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

Act V, Scene III

But not again shall a bronzed Indian,
Gliding from his wigwam, with an arrow
Drawn to wing a mallard for his breakfast,
Hesitate and picture, with ravished eye,
And imagination unconfined,
A Happy Hunting Ground,
The while he contemplateth at the horizon
The dun withers of a buffalo
In silhouette upon the radiant oval."

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

EPILOGUE

Now in reservations, here and there,
Indians mope about, within glare of cities,
Where once their nations held their courses,
Season in and season out, with only a
Change of coating and a change of abandon,
Like the brooks.

And a few hundred buffalo,
In a reserve at Wainwright, and a herd at
Banff, Alberta, constitute the links between
Pemmican and wheat.

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

EPILOGUE

Victorious, on the buffalo plains,
Stand the hosts of the king of wheat.
Sit on a train at Winnipeg on a harvest
Morning, and you will ride till noon through stooks.
As far to the north as the eye can distinguish, broken
Only by fields of summer fallow and pasture,
Gleam the golden headed multitudes!
Filling the landscape to the south?
Veteran squares of Manitoba Hard!
From the eastern dusk to the last peep
Of the sun, in the upper west, where
Failing airs fondly close his fingers
In embrace upon the beautiful world?
Lines of the tall Marquis Guards of Saskatchewan!
Waken from a dream of the buffalo millions,
And look out in the rushing moonlight?
The stacked arms of Red Fife columns!
Up at sunrise?
Salute the plumed arrays of Alberta Red!
There, where the Bow rivers meet, is Calgary.
Halt! Is that a highland air?
Hearken to the gathering Selkirks!

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

EPILOGUE

Those tents along the western sky
Are outposts of the Rocky Mountain giants.
Up yonder patchy ravine is Banff.
There in the foreground, yet beyond the dictate
Of the plow, sulking in his Rocky Mountain Park—
Forty miles of bastions aspiring
Along a covert flanking for two hundred miles
The myriads of fair-haired myrmidons—
Abides the patriarch of the sequestered race
Of buffalo. Here girds he his forces:
Majestic rivers his spies; chinooks his scouts.
About him fall the shadows of the stooks
Of time. Behind him, league beyond league,
Ever rising, domineer the drifting peaks
Of the Great Divide. And—
And not a chieftain peak but at his nod
Stand firm a half a hundred sentinels.
And not a sentinel beetling
But at the darkling of his craggy brow
Spring a clan of stalwart spruce!
And not a steep of spruce, but at their naked knees
Climb and jostle the scrub and rabble
Of the murmuring valley wide!

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

EPILOGUE

And now

From that vale of purple ridges arise battlements
Of which the Rockies are but bulwarks:
By flaming honeysuckle and birch-whipped torrent;
Past spring still climbing with her orgy juices;
Over winding columns of thinning fir;
Over rusted beds of leashed avalanches;
Above goat's survey on pitching pyramid;
Above fossil cataracts, their terraces blue reviving
At the rumbling canons from the mountain
cathedral;

Overlooking the couchant giant
Of the Bow eschelon from whose frozen breast
A trinity of rivers suspends eternally
The Atlantic, the Arctic and the Pacific.

And yet

From that glistening landscape of the eagle,
Flashing auroras and blood-rack sunsets
Like beacons to the east and to the west;
Thundering glaciers buried ten thousand years
To grind new passes for the frost-edged winds;
Lightening hurricanes, chasing gonies on the Pacific,
To sweep the cyclones from the rainbow billows,
And dash them from storm clouds off
Spinning into the spiral gorges;
Still—still—soar the snow towers of the Selkirks!

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

EPILOGUE

Sublime bosoms of the stars,
Do ye know that Alpine climbers
Have borne to your feet
Young Canada's maiden wreath of immortal names?
For fitting base? Columbia—
Like the Genoan mariner, ocean-rocked,
And fixed against a world
To hoist, on pinnacle and pinnacle,
The purple of the king and cross!
For that white livery of infancy,
Which ye wear? Selkirk—
Herald of a budding nation's triumph!
For a finger? Macdonald—
Architect of Canada's cradle!

And have ye seen the buffalo come and go?
And the red man come and go?
And the white man come?
Aye! And thy brow mayest weary,
Mighty range!
Enduring aloft in unrivalled kingship,
Thy tiaraed zone immaculate!
And thou mayest stretch
Thy stupendous bones along the plains,
And pillow thy sapphire-glancing head

THE PASSING OF THE BUFFALO

EPILOGUE

In the Great Lakes,
Until Niagara sizzle!
Then will ghosts of wheat lords, fathoms deep,
Chatter of pigmy stooks in the chinks
Of their colossal ribs!

And, anon,
A broader and a higher tableland
Will resound to the tramp of bison.

